



WATER LINES

NEWS FROM THE WATER RESOURCES DIVISION

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION • SPRING 1996

MISSION: TO PROVIDE THE MOST BENEFIT, THROUGH THE BEST USE, OF THE STATE'S WATER RESOURCES FOR THE PEOPLE OF MONTANA

DEPARTMENT NEWS

FORT PECK RURAL WATER SUPPLY

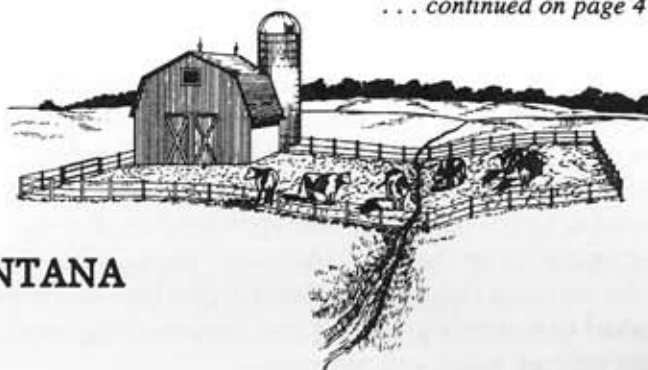
There may be a happy ending in store for the 225 homes and six businesses in northeastern Montana who have been forced to haul water to their homes and businesses. Montana's bitter winters make hauling water difficult and expensive and the water can become contaminated.

Local residents formed the Fort Peck Rural County Water District in June 1992 in an attempt to resolve the problems caused by the insufficient quantities and poor quality of the groundwater in this 24,160-acre district which partially borders Fort Peck Reservoir.

The District has joined forces with the federal Bureau of Reclamation and Corps of Engineers, MSE-HKM Engineers, and DNRC to solve the problem. Federal legislation introduced in December 1995 will provide funding for a

... continued on page 4

COLLABORATIVE RURAL WATER SOLUTIONS



ROCKY BOYS/NORTH CENTRAL MONTANA REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM

The budget bill that was signed by President Clinton in April included \$300,000 to study the feasibility of the proposed Rocky Boys/North Central Montana Regional Water Supply System.



The proposed system would provide good quality drinking water to a large area of north central Montana. A pipeline would carry treated water from Tiber Dam to the Rocky Boy's Reservation. The Chippewa Cree Tribe is seeking the pipeline as part of a settlement of the Tribe's water rights. The pipeline would also have the capacity to serve rural water districts, communities, and individual residences in a large area of north central Montana. The current study area for the project is highlighted on the map.

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RON GUSE



Ron Guse, the uncommissioned guru of water rights in Montana, was hired by the Montana Water Resources Board in July 1968 as an Engineering Technician. Ron will be retiring on July 19, 1996. Ron now manages the New Appropriations Section in the Water

Rights Bureau. Ron was born and raised in the Bitterroot Valley and attended schools in Hamilton. He graduated from the University of Montana in June 1968 with a degree in geography. Over the years Ron has developed a notable comprehension of water rights law, administration, and policies. Ron's appreciation and understanding of the Prior Appropriation Doctrine may relate to his childhood exposure to water right controversies in the Bitterroot Valley.

When Ron went to work for the Montana Water Resources Board he assisted with publication of the last water resource survey books. During his initial years with the Water Resources Board, Ron developed a keen interest in new appropriations of water. In 1972 Montana redrafted its constitution, which led to the Montana Water Use Act. Ron assisted with the drafting and implementation of the Water Use Act. This Act, which led to the conception of the Water Rights Bureau, provided for the administrative appropriation of water. During the Water Use Act's adolescent years, Ron served as the assistant chief for the Water Rights Bureau. Ron worked extensively preparing and implementing water right policies, rules, and procedures.

Ron escorted the Montana Water Use Act from inception through many modifications over the years. Ron's exhaustive experience and understanding of water rights has served as a sounding board for several amendments to the Water Use Act. In addition, policy makers and water users from all over the United States have consulted with Ron on water right issues and laws. His interest and understanding of ground water control matters has commanded respect and attention from people throughout the western states.

Several major attributes have resulted in the water rights arena over the past several years. Many of those attributes reflect Ron's efforts and leadership. His congenial manner has chaperoned the professionalism and polish reflected in water rights services provided by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation today. Ron managed the removal of a vast backlog of contested case hearings that manifested during the early 1980's. Ron received commendation from former DNRC Directors for his role and assistance in enacting legislative mandates and streamlining the water right

...Ron's vast water right knowledge, his professional manner and pleasant demeanor will be missed by all.

application processes. He recently formatted and guided the development of standards of proof that water right applicants must follow. Ron's efforts have contributed substantially and impacted water rights administration practiced today.

In addition to his extensive water right undertakings, Ron has served as a member of the Board of Water Well Contractors for 17 years. As a BWWC member, Ron's service included terms as chairman and vice-chairman. Ron is typically called upon by the well drilling industry for assistance and direction involving well construction issues and controversies.

When others observe Ron's consideration and smile, it is contagious and promotes success and enjoyable work relationships. In this respect Ron has led others by example. Ron's splendid attitude and quality work have been very positive contributions to the citizens of the State of Montana. In addition to Ron's vast water right knowledge, his professional manner and pleasant demeanor will be missed by all. Those who have shared time and conversation with Ron are indebted to him. We congratulate him on his retirement and wish him the very best. ☺

MILK RIVER PLANNING AND SUPPORT



As a result of encouragement from Milk River water users, the Water Resources Division has hired a new hydrologist to work full time in the Milk River Basin. Brent Espin, a hydrologist and planner new to DNRC and to state government, started working this May in the Glasgow Water Resources Regional Office.

Brent is available to work with private pumpers as well as irrigation district members, at their request, to identify areas for potential efficiency improvements, to design improvements. Brent will also assist in finding potential funding. He will offer his skills in support of local water use planning efforts and local basin working groups. Brent will be available to coordinate and act as liaison among the Tribes, the Conservation Districts, and other entities on problems identified by the Lower Missouri River Coordinated Resource Council. He will provide technical expertise on the complexities of equitably quantifying the federal reserved water rights of the Tribes. In addition, Brent will work on the international Milk River water apportionment and storage activities.

It is DNRC's goal that Brent become a trusted and respected regional professional and member of the Highline community with credibility through his ability to listen, compromise, explain, and solve problems.

Water Lines' **Summer** issue will profile Brent and the entire Water Resources Glasgow Regional Office in the "People in Water" section . . . so stay tuned! ☺

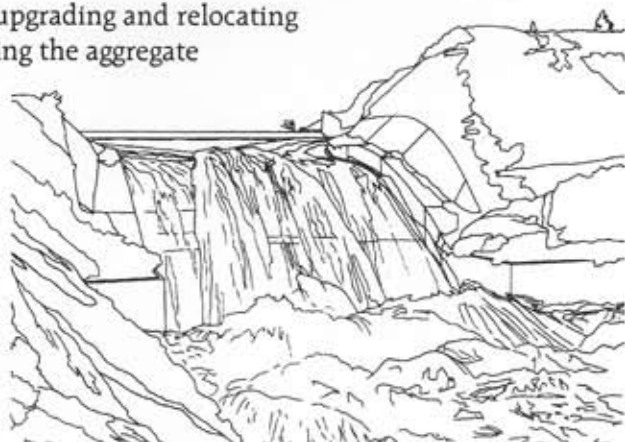
DEPARTMENT NEWS

Tongue River Basin Project

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, and the Montana DNRC recently completed the environmental impact statement and signed the Record of Decision identifying the final course of action for the Tongue River Basin Project in southeastern Montana. Final design for the first phase of the project is complete and the bidding process has begun. It has been a monumental task on an accelerated time schedule. More than 20 Water Resources Division employees have responded to the call and have willingly worked many long stressful hours through the winter and spring. Incredibly, we are right on schedule!

Construction of the project scheduled to begin in August includes upgrading and relocating portions of Big Horn County Road No. 380, and mining and processing the aggregate necessary for the project. Construction of the spillway will begin in early 1997. Relocation of State Park recreational facilities will begin in late 1996.

The Project will alleviate dam safety concerns, provide up to an additional 20,000 acre-feet of water to the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, and provide for fish and wildlife enhancement projects in the Tongue River Basin. These project goals are all components of the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reserved Water Rights Settlement Act of 1992. ☺



Fort Peck . . .

pressurized water supply to more than 600 people. During the grazing season, livestock will also benefit from the project. The legislation has been passed by the Senate and is awaiting action in the House.

Improvements include an intake into Fort Peck Reservoir, a water treatment plant, storage tank, and distribution lines. The project will be cooperatively funded by federal, local, and state entities. ©

Rocky Boys/North Central . . .

The \$300,000 will cover most of the cost of the feasibility study which is to be completed in February 1997. The study will be overseen by the Ad Hoc Coordinating Committee for the Rocky Boys/North Central Montana Regional Water Supply System, a group formed to promote the development of the system.

Montana Governor Marc Racicot and members of Montana's congressional delegation have been very supportive of this initiative. It has been successful so far due to the broad base of support for a regional solution to drinking water supply problems. ©

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ROCKY BOYS/NORTH CENTRAL MONTANA REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM TASK FORCE



*L to R: Gerald Grabofsky (City of Havre), Dave Jones (Hill County Water District), Paul Russette Jr. (Chippewa Cree Tribe), Dan Keil (Tiber County Water District), Ray Wadsworth (MT Rural Water Systems, Inc.), Bruce Sunchild (Chippewa Cree Tribe)
Not Pictured: Jim Coffman (Town of Chester), Roger St. Pierre (Chippewa Cree Tribe)*

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